

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**U.S. RELATIONS WITH JAPAN:
A CRITICAL SECURITY ISSUE?**

by

Lieutenant Colonel David P. Rodgers
United States Army

Professor Glenn K. Cunningham
Project Adviser

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ABSTRACT

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America shares many vital national interests in the Asia Pacific region with Japan. Aside from obvious U.S. concerns in the greater Middle East, there are a number of critical interests that keep the U.S. focused on the Far East: 1) global military basing and presence in the region, 2) concern for China's growing economic and military might, 3) response to North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and 4) concern for the regional terrorist threat.

The 2005 U.S. National Defense Strategy declares that, "We will create conditions for a favorable international system by honoring our security commitments"--commitments which are critical to our interests abroad. However, in order to do this, the United States needs a firm commitment from its allies as well. Japan's commitment to its bilateral alliance with United States recently became evident with its approval for the U.S. to permanently base a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in their country. Japan's commitments have solidified the U.S.-Japan relationship and have set the stage for long-term security relations in pursuit of common interests. This SRP analyzes some of these common vital interests and affirms the ongoing value of sustaining a strategic relationship with our former Pacific adversary.

U.S. RELATIONS WITH JAPAN: A CRITICAL SECURITY ISSUE?

On 26 July 2003, Japan's Diet approved the deployment of 1000 Japanese troops in support of the U.S. led Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).¹ From an outsider's perspective, that does not seem very significant, considering that Japan is a highly developed country with tremendous economic resources. However, considering that over the past 50 years Japan has been a pacifist state relying on armed forces for self-defense only, this is a remarkable initiative. This is the first time since 1945 that Japan has deployed troops outside of the country while not serving under a UN mandate. Simply put, Japanese soldiers have not fired one bullet in combat since World War II. Nonetheless, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi engineered passage of legislation that permitted the deployment.

The Diet's approval and Prime Minister Koizumi's support for the passage has not only changed history, it has also reignited a diplomatic flame that was only flickering between the U.S. and Japan. Since Japan's surrender ending World War II (WWII), the U.S.-Japan relationship has changed from one based purely on security, centered on the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, to a critical relationship with our most important ally in the Asia Pacific region.

America shares many vital national interests in the Asia Pacific region with Japan. Beyond obvious U.S. concerns in the greater Middle East, there are a number of critical interests that keep the U.S. focused on the Far East: 1) global military basing and presence in the region, 2) concern for China's growing economic and military might, 3) response to North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and 4) concern for the regional terrorist threat.

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Brief history of the U.S.-Japan Relationship (Post-WWII)

Since the end of WWII, the United States has maintained an active involvement in Japan. From the end of the war until 1952, the United States occupied Japan. During that time the U.S. helped to rebuild the country by providing assistance in governing, including developing a new Constitution; in reconstruction; in stabilizing the country; and in providing for the defense of Japan. While assisting Japan in drafting their new Constitution, the U.S. insisted that Japan strictly limit its military capabilities. Japan had seen the horrors of war and deliberately decided not to build an offensive military. Through its Constitution, Japan constrained its ability to act militarily. In Japan's Constitution (also known as the Peace Constitution), completed in 1947, Article 9 includes a renunciation of war, a ban on possession of forces to wage war, and the state's refusal of a right of belligerence.³

After extensive rebuilding and assistance, on 8 September 1951 Japan entered into a treaty with 48 nations which became known as the Treaty of San Francisco. This treaty functioned as an instrument to officially terminate WWII and determine Japan's position in the world. The treaty made extensive use of the UN Charter and placed Japan's destiny in the hands of the international community. The treaty also served as Japan's official renunciation of treaty rights over many regional areas including Korea and Taiwan. Finally, it affirms Japan's inherent right for individual self defense and permits Japan to enter into collective security arrangements.

In 1952, the new Constitution was tested when General MacArthur ordered the formation of a 75,000 man "police reserve force" to replace the departing U.S. force needed for the invasion of South Korea.⁴ Although the new Constitution prohibited a standing army with offensive capabilities, in 1954 Japan planned for the development of a self-defense force that would provide the defense of the homeland. The United States concurred with this initiative because it was preoccupied with other military matters, and resources for the defense of Japan were extremely scarce. The U.S. monitored developments of Japan's new self-defense force, ensuring limitations were placed on its capabilities in accord with the new Constitution.

Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security

As security in the region became more problematic, especially with the rise of the Soviet Union, Japan felt vulnerable with only a small self-defense military. So it sought security elsewhere. In 1960 the United States negotiated a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with Japan, thereby providing additional security for the defense of Japan. The U.S. valued this

new relationship: not only did it offer Japan greater security, it also provided the U.S. with another significant Cold War ally, one that had even defeated Russia in 1905.

The 1960 treaty has three key provisions: 1) U.S. commitment to defend Japan in the event that Japan was attacked, 2) provision that Japan would be consulted before the United States moved major forces into or out of the country, and 3) allowance for either party to end the treaty after 1970 with one year's notice.⁵ During the 1970s and 1980s, some Americans regarded the treaty as a means for Japan to gain free security by using the U.S. as the nation's defender. Meanwhile, as the Japanese economy recovered, the newly prosperous nation did not increase its defense spending. Thus it appeared that Japan reaped the benefits of a strong defense without paying its proportionate costs.

This free-lunch view, however, fails to acknowledge the great contributions that the Japanese were making even during that time. Although on the surface the treaty seems a bit one-sided, with Japan receiving the lion's share of the benefits, the United States has received superb assistance from Japan, especially support for U.S. military operations abroad. Further, the U.S. was the primary drafter of Japan's Constitution, and hence was actively involved in placing significant limitations on the Japanese self-defense force. Japan reciprocated by assisting the U.S., not by providing military personnel, but by provisioning equipment, supplies, money, and basing rights. For example, the U.S. enjoyed basing facilities in Japan during the Vietnam War. The U.S. had numerous combat service support facilities located in Japan, including weapons and ordnance depots as well as major hospitals supporting operations in Vietnam. Likewise, during Operation Desert Shield/Storm, Japan provided the U.S.-led coalition with mine-sweeping ships, limited logistical and reconstruction support, and extensive monetary assistance.⁶

Despite constitutional restrictions, Japan has been involved in peacekeeping operations (PKO) since 1992. The first involvement aroused much criticism against using a military force outside of the country, because many believed that the deployment violated the constitutional limits on the military. Then in 1991, Japan passed the International Peace Cooperation Law, which allows for Japanese participation in UN peacekeeping operations when cease-fire agreements are in place.⁷ Since that time Japan has deployed peacekeepers to Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Golan Heights, East Timor, and Afghanistan.⁸ Japan has also deployed assistance to natural disasters in Honduras, Turkey, India, Iran, and areas affected by the 2004 tsunami.⁹ Although restrained by its Constitution, Japan fulfills its obligations to the global community and is committed to peaceful values through its efforts to providing assistance where possible.

Global Basing U.S. Forces in the Region

From the U.S. perspective, probably the most valuable component of the security treaty is the military basing opportunities that it provides. 54,000 U.S. service members are currently located in Japan in the following major components:¹⁰

USAF – 5th Air Force with an F-16 and F-15 Wing located on three airbases

USMC – III Marine Expeditionary Force with associated logistics and aviation support

USN – 7th Fleet, including bases to support fleet operations

USA – Headquarters, U.S. Army Japan; 1st Bn, 1st Special Force Group and several logistical bases

This array of U.S. military presence and capabilities demonstrates Japan's geostrategic value to the United States. In accord with the treaty, the U.S. must obtain Japan's approval for any major changes to the array of forces or their capabilities. Indeed, the U.S. has been asking for a number of additional basing privileges from the Japanese government. For example, in order to maintain force modernization, the U.S. has asked for many years to upgrade the naval aircraft carrier based in Japan to a nuclear-powered carrier. Japan, the only country in the world to have been attacked by atomic weapons and to have survived those horrors first hand, has always declined the request. But Japan has recently acquiesced to the U.S. requests in this very sensitive matter.

Japan has finally succumbed to the pressures of the U.S. in order to further the alliance. This decision completely reverses a long-standing tradition of not allowing nuclear military equipment in Japan, whether it was a weapon or a carrier powered by nuclear energy. This decision further shows the strength of the alliance between the two countries and demonstrates the steps Japan is willing to take to maintain security not only in their country, but also in the region.

There are a number of explanations for the change, but the exact reasons are uncertain. Japan may have concluded that, in view of current world events and the global threat of terrorism, the risks of attack have become greater. Al Qaeda has threatened to attack Tokyo and other nations providing support to the U.S. coalition in Iraq. London and Madrid have been bombed and Tokyo could be another target. Japan also fears China's growth in the region as well as a noncompliant North Korea led by an irrational dictator. All of these issues could have contributed to a change in Japan's non-nuclear stance.

U.S. forces in Japan account for only a portion of the U.S. military presence throughout the region. Other substantial U.S. forces are based in the Republic of Korea and Guam.

Moreover, the U.S. plans to shift forces throughout the region, based on the military requirements as well as the willingness of various countries to allow basing U.S. forces on their soil.

Beyond allowing permanent basing in Japan in support of the current treaty and supporting a responsive U.S. security presence in the region, the Japanese government provides a large portion of the financial requirements to support such a force. In 2002, Japan's monetary host nation support accounted for 74.5% (over \$4 billion) of the costs of the U.S. presence.¹¹ Japan's cost-sharing program is the most generous of all U.S. allies. Nonetheless, Japan spends only 1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on its defense budget, the smallest proportion by any U.S. ally except Luxembourg.¹² In effect, the treaty has crafted a win-win security arrangement.

In real terms, this assistance supports service member housing, office buildings, utilities, facility engineering, infrastructure support, base maintenance, training areas, and other material contributions to the readiness of the force--assistance that is extremely expensive but absolutely essential. In return, Japan receives the security provided by U.S. defense forces. U.S. presence helps to deter and dissuade any potential adversary from trying to invade or attack Japan. The presence of these forces in Japan also provides psychological comfort to the Japanese, who know the force is already positioned and ready to fight for their defense.

Many key basing initiatives were addressed during consultative talks held in October 2005. This meeting was referred to as the "2+2" because both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense met with Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense.¹³ The talks addressed prospective closer ties between the two countries especially with regard to defense and security:

- 1) More bilateral and collocated headquarters:¹⁴ The Japanese are transforming their defense department to join their services and are establishing a joint command and control structure. They see the U.S. as a forerunner of joint and coalition operations and are establishing portions of their force near major U.S. headquarters (HQ) to facilitate coordination and command and control (C2) of similar forces. For example, they are collocating their Air Command and Control (Air Defense Command) with U.S. 5th Air Force at Yokota. By collocating HQs, the air defense elements can coordinate more efficiently, and eventually fully integrate their forces and capabilities as both nations move toward a joint ballistic missile defense program.
- 2) Increased U.S. Army C2 Capability: Headquarters, U.S. Army Japan (USARJ) is a unique headquarters providing C2 for limited U.S. Army assets in Japan. The Army is

seeking to modernize the Headquarters into a deployable, JTF-capable headquarters.¹⁵ One proposal calls for moving I Corps HQ or a portion of the HQ forward to Camp Zama, thereby providing greater C2 capabilities.¹⁶ This would provide the U.S. Army with more options in the region to respond to contingencies. Currently, the USARJ HQ has limited deployment and C2 capabilities. This change would strengthen the HQ and enable it to deploy from Japan executing C2 in support of contingencies.

- 3) Relocation of USMC forces:¹⁷ The Japanese have been seeking relocation of USMC elements in Okinawa to other locations on the island or outside of Japan. The plan is to move Futenma Marine Corps Air Station to northern Okinawa and transfer approximately 7,000 Marines to elsewhere in the Pacific region.

The U.S. must understand that continued U.S. presence in Japan will require constant negotiations. Not every outcome will be the desired outcome. It will take many years for some of these decisions to become final and in fact executed. In the meantime, there will be some give and take by both sides in order to keep the alliance healthy.

China – Partner or Threat

Stability in the Asia Pacific area is critical to the peace and prosperity of all countries in the region. Globalization has proven beneficial to the entire region while integrating it with the rest of the world, especially economically. The U.S. has economic ties with virtually every nation in the region, not just with the big two--China and Japan. Nearly 35% of all U.S. trade is conducted within this region.¹⁸ Instability in the region would harm the U.S. economy and ultimately the personal well-being of nearly all Americans. Two stability concerns come immediately to the forefront: China's increasing economic and military strength and North Korea's nuclear potential.

With a population of 1.3 billion people, China is the most populous country in the world.¹⁹ All other countries in the region are dwarfed by China. This huge population generates a tremendous economic output, accounting for the world's second largest GDP, which is projected to grow over the next several years at a rate in excess of 8% annually!²⁰ China also trades with a large number of countries around the world.

Economically, China is the U.S.'s largest trading partner outside of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) area. Failure to maintain stable trade with China would be detrimental to the U.S. economy. The U.S. imports an immense amount of goods from China, and U.S. industry relies heavily on Chinese imports. For example, textile and apparel industries

in the U.S. rely heavily on goods and products from China. China's predicted share of the U.S. apparel industry is expected to be as high as 30% by 2006.²¹ Other major Chinese exports to the U.S. include steel, electronic components, electronic appliances, computers, and cell phones. Without having access to these goods, or not having them at the reduced price that China can sell them, U.S. markets would suffer--and Americans would as well.

Trading with China requires freedom of movement and navigation throughout the world. U.S. presence in Japan contributes greatly to regional security that sustains this freedom and enables the U.S. to respond promptly to crises if the need arises. U.S. presence also clearly informs the region that the U.S. is serious about the security of its regional allies.

The U.S. faces significant issues that require a diplomatic balancing act to ensure our relationship with China remains friendly and productive. Although China is a major trading partner, it also poses an emerging threat due to the development and size of its military. Beginning in 1989, China's annual defense spending as a percentage of total government expenditures grew by double digits through 2001.²² China has built a total active duty force of 2.3 million personnel, backed by a huge reserve force.²³ Why does China need such a large force? Is it to address internal unrest or to threaten others, especially Taiwan?

In 1996, China fired missiles toward Taiwan, prompting the U.S. to dispatch two aircraft carriers to the region. This action clarified some issues. It signaled clearly that China can expect American involvement if it makes an aggressive move toward Taiwan. Under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), any unprovoked attack or other coercive behavior toward the island (including blockades) would likely trigger an American military response.²⁴ Public declaration of the U.S. commitment with regard to the TRA serves as a warning to China, indicating exactly where America stands with regard to Taiwan. China understands this, yet continues to build and modernize its forces.

In 1991, the Cable News Network (CNN) provided China with a first-hand look at the remarkable capabilities of U.S. forces, technology, and firepower used during Operation Desert Storm. This capability sent shocks through China, as its leaders realized how inferior their forces and equipment were in comparison. During this period, China reformed and modernized the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). Since then, China has acquired more technologically advanced equipment and has developed improved capabilities. For example, China continues to work on increased range and accuracy of its Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM). China has also purchased three decommissioned aircraft carriers, adding to a growing naval capability of their destroyers and submarines.²⁵ There is no doubt that this is a concern to the U.S.

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report indicates that Asia is emerging as a region susceptible to large-scale military competition.²⁶ It further states that “the possibility exists that a military competitor with a formidable resource base will emerge in the region.”²⁷ Although China is not specifically cited in the QDR, it is obvious, in view of these significant developments, that China remains a concern to the U.S. in the region and offers yet another reason for U.S. presence in Japan.

A Nuclear North Korea

On 27 July 1953, an armistice was signed between the United Nations Command (UNC) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). Although open hostilities have ended, technically the UNC remains at war with North Korea. Since that time, the U.S. has stayed actively involved in the Republic of Korea (ROK), maintaining a military presence on the border between the two countries since the establishment of the armistice, which stipulated a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Over the years, the U.S. has committed to fighting side-by-side with the ROK Army if the North attacked. Since the armistice, there have been a few encounters with the North Korean forces, but none that have led to the brink of war. However, in 1998 Japan witnessed a disturbing North Korean capability when a DPRK test missile was launched over Japan.²⁸

The most serious regional development in the last decade is North Korea's announcement that it has constructed nuclear weapons. Weapons development and the possible proliferation of nuclear arms technology has become the biggest U.S. concern. In January 2002, President Bush announced that North Korea was a member of the “axis of evil” since it was arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction while starving its citizens.²⁹ These developments have had a powerful impact upon regional stability. Nuclear capability only adds to the potential threat posed by North Korea. A missile capability, coupled with the potential to acquire nuclear weapons, poses a significant threat to the region and possibly to the world.

In addition to the missile launch, Japan has also been exposed to spy ship incursions off its shores as well as the brazen DPRK abductions of 13 Japanese citizens in the late-1970s and early-1980s. Needless to say, Japan has approached calls to normalize relations with North Korea with extreme caution. Even so, Japan still desires normalized relations for a couple of reasons. First, North Korea is the only country formerly occupied by Japan with which it has not resumed normalized relations.³⁰ Second, Japan seeks security through normalization and sees this as an important step toward resolving the nuclear issue.³¹

In February 2005 North Korea announced that it would indefinitely suspend participation in the Six Party Talks, which focused on North Korea's nuclear program. At that time the North Koreans claimed that they possessed nuclear weapons. The U.S. administration has subsequently taken a hard-line stance toward the nation. The U.S. has suspended aid to North Korea until it begins to unequivocally participate in dismantling its nuclear program. North Korea has consistently made false promises, hoping to get the U.S. to provide aid as it has in the past in return for a pledge to abandon its nuclear program. Recently, North Korea demanded that the U.S. build a light-water nuclear reactor before the current facility is dismantled.³² Regardless of what transpires, it is safe to say that in a closed society like North Korea, strategic intentions are hard to verify. As long as America's allies confront the threat of this "rogue" state, the U.S. will join them. Clearly, the presence of U.S. forces in the ROK and in Japan helps to stabilize the region and deter this potentially dangerous adversary.

Rise of Regional Terrorism

The fight against terrorism is another common vital interest shared by the two countries. Even though terrorism has existed for centuries, it is difficult to find a universally approved definition. The Department of Defense defines terrorism as the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies, employed in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological.³³ In the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, President Bush declared:

Today our enemies have seen the results of what civilized nations can, and will, do against regimes that harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals. Afghanistan has been liberated; coalition forces continue to hunt down the Taliban and al Qaeda. But it is not only this battlefield on which we will engage terrorists. Thousands of trained terrorists remain at large with cells in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia.³⁴

In the strategy, Asia is recognized for its terrorism along with every other region in the world. The U.S. knows it cannot win the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) alone. U.S. policy therefore encourages allies to help in this war, especially those allies that have the resources to contribute.

Japan has experienced firsthand the tragedy of terrorism in their country. In 1994 and again in 1995, Aum Shinrikyo, an extremist cult in Japan named for the truth of creation and destruction of the universe, used sarin gas to terrorize in Japan.³⁵ The results of the attacks were devastating, killing a total of 12 and injuring 5000 people. These incidents, coupled with

the impact of the September 11th attacks, have forged even a greater bond between the two countries.

Terrorist threats exist throughout the Asia Pacific region. The U.S. is actively fighting the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines. In early 2002, the U.S. deployed several hundred Special Forces troops to assist the Philippine government in combating terrorism on the southern island of Basilan.³⁶ This was the U.S.'s second deployment of troops to the Philippines in support GWOT, and U.S. troops are still operating in the southern Philippines. In October 2002, the terrorist group Jamah Islamia (JI) attacked two nightclubs in Bali, Indonesia, killing 202 people.³⁷ In August 2003, the same group destroyed a Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia.³⁸ The U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism posits a link among the ASG, JI, and al Qaeda, further illustrating the importance of the region in the GWOT.³⁹

These attacks and the spread of terrorism throughout the region are located in the "Non-Integrating Gap" area cited by Thomas Barnett.⁴⁰ Such gaps are characterized by pandemics; illegal trafficking of drugs, people, small arms, money, and intellectual property; and terrorist havens.⁴¹ Furthermore, governments in the gap regions cannot cope with these endemic problems. Basically, countries unable to govern the entire state, that lack the resources to attack terrorist occupations, and that fall well below the poverty line will fall victim to the growth of the terrorist networks. These areas also provide an opportunity for terrorists to set up training bases and recruit. The Asia Pacific region has many countries that meet these characteristics, including Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Japan is concerned with the transnational operations of these groups as they look for other basing locations in the region. So Japan has tightened immigration policies to ensure close scrutiny of those entering the country.⁴²

Soon after the September 11th attacks, Japan moved quickly to denounce the attacks. A month following the attacks the Japanese parliament approved a plan to assist in combating terrorism with passage of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law. This law provides a work-around to the Constitution and authorizes Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) vessels to provide fuel to U.S. and UK ships and permits Japanese military aircraft to provide transportation support to joint military activities.⁴³ This immediate Japanese resolve strengthens the long-standing alliance and assures future Japanese commitment to the GWOT. Japan took further steps to work with the international community to cut off financing for suspected terrorist organizations as well as to interface with the legal and intelligence communities to further combat terrorist actions.⁴⁴

As a regional economic superpower, Japan is concerned about terrorism--both as an economic threat and a security problem. The disruption of economic activity from an attack can recover, as evidenced in the U.S. But the devastation and death wreaked by terrorist attacks are difficult to cope with. On 11 December 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi made a public statement indicating Japan's resolve to support the GWOT:

Three months have passed since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. I myself and the people of Japan are together with President George W. Bush and the people of the United States in that we shall never forget the September 11 tragedy and our common resolve to fight against terrorism. Japan is resolved to continue to stand by the United States in its determined fight against terrorism, and to contribute actively, on its own initiative, to the efforts of the international community, in order to prevent and eradicate international terrorism and to ensure that such terrorist acts will never be repeated.⁴⁵

Terrorism knows no boundaries. It transits the globe rather easily. The Asia Pacific region has shown its susceptibility to terrorist activity and continues to be a concern to the U.S. as well. In October 2003, Japan issued a warning to its citizens after a videotape purportedly by Osama bin Laden threatened suicide attacks on the United States and the countries supporting the American occupation of Iraq, including Japan, Britain, Spain, Australia, Poland, and Italy.⁴⁶ Although Japan has not yet been attacked, there have been many ominous indicators around the world that have caused much apprehension. Both Madrid and London have been viciously attacked, and both were mentioned in the 2003 al Qaeda warning. Also in May 2004, Japan arrested five men who had contact with Lionel Dumont, a suspected al Qaeda member who had entered and traveled around Japan in 2002-2003.⁴⁷ This discovery of a suspected al Qaeda operative in Japan reverberated throughout the country with the disturbing message that terrorists could be in their midst.

These indicators, coupled with Japan's continued commitment to the U.S.-Japan alliance and their public support for the U.S.-Japan security arrangements, worry many Japanese citizens.⁴⁸ On the surface, these indicators, taken individually, may not raise much concern. But considered all together, they affirm that Japan is taking great risks to remain a steadfast U.S. ally. This steadfastness may indeed make Japan a prime target for a terrorist attack. The U.S. recognizes this commitment to a common vital interest and continues to support Japan in its GWOT both domestically and internationally.

Conclusion

Ever since the 1854 Treaty of Peace and Amity was signed between the U.S. and Japan, the two countries have developed a relationship that has been tested over time. In President

Bush's comments during his message commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the U.S.-Japan relationship, he declared, "Today, America has no closer ally than Japan."⁴⁹ This declaration leaves no doubt about where relations between the two countries stand and the priority the U.S. places on Asia Pacific interests.

The pursuit of peace in the region through nonaggression has served Japan well over the years, especially during the Cold War. Japan relies on its strong alliance with the U.S. to provide a powerful supplement to its defenses. At the same time, the U.S. benefits from a forward presence in the region. This forward presence in the region is only one facet of this crucial partnership which enables the U.S. to address its vital national interests. During the consultative talks between the two countries in the fall of 2005, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld pointed out that Japan is a key security partner in not only the region, but the world as well. He stressed that Japan is a strong, stable, and trusted partner and that it should shoulder a greater portion of global security.⁵⁰ Indeed, Japan has assumed greater responsibility with regard to global security issues.

Nonetheless, Japan's Constitution continues to limit its ability to shoulder this burden. Fortunately, President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi have enjoyed a great relationship and have been able to influence decisions in support of the alliance over the last several years. The tenure for both leaders will eventually end, with the Prime Minister stepping down first in September 2006. This could place a strain in the relationship depending on the political leader that replaces him. Likewise, in 2008 President Bush will be replaced, once again calling into question the relationship that is being forged through their partnership.

To Japan's credit, it has been actively involved in global security affairs. However, each time a decision is made to deploy forces in support of operations abroad, it has required a new law or measure approved by the Diet. At some point, when the world needs it most, there is a chance that the system will not allow for their participation. Japan has reached the point where it needs to carefully review its current Constitution to decide where it wants to be in the global security environment and determine what amendments need to be drafted to enable it to attain that goal. As the leaders change, it may be more difficult to gain approval for a military action that the Constitution currently limits. A new Japanese political leader may be unwilling to champion the approval due to dissent within the political system. Without changes, decisions to support military action could just as easily be disapproved, thereby jeopardizing the alliance.

Even with these constitutional limits, political sensitivities, and a cumbersome approval process, Japan has sustained its commitment to our partnership in many ways: 1) financial support to both U.S. forces in-country as well as assisting in peacekeeping operations,

2) government authorization for the deployment of portions of the self-defense force to Iraq and other critical areas, 3) partnering with regional allies and neighbors to negotiate for a less threatening North Korea, and 4) joining the U.S. in the GWOT.

As such global challenges continue and even when it may be unpopular or even dangerous to be associated with the U.S., Japan continues to show its resolve to continue as a U.S. ally. As the U.S. reduces troops in the ROK over the next several years, U.S. troop presence in Japan will become even more critical. This presence will help keep in check two potential adversaries, provide stability in the region, and foster a closer defense relationship with Japan itself. As the only superpower and with global interests, the U.S. benefits greatly from its close reliable ally in Japan.

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